



The Birthday Menu

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Level 3

Kanchi burst into tears.

"Sorry, Kanchi, but we can't do anything. It is still not safe to go out," said Mummy.

"But you promised you would take me to the restaurant on my birthday," said Kanchi.

"COVID-19 is at its peak, Kanchi. We are still in lockdown," said Papa.

"I will cook something nice for you," said Mummy.





"No! You only cook baingan bharta all the time."

"What if I add some fried kantola slices to the bharta? You will love it," added Papa.

Kanchi ran to the balcony and bawled.

"I am tired of staying inside.
I want to eat Patil Bandhu's
vada pao. I want to go to
Swaad Bhavan."

Mummy and Papa let her be.





But Kanchi's screams stirred up the otherwise quiet Sunrise Society.



“What do you like eating at Swaad Bhavan, dear?” asked Janaki Aiji.

Kanchi felt shy but said, “I like their chowmein, lemon rice, aloo paratha, butter chicken and paper dosa”.

“That’s a lot of different delicacies at one place,” said Janaki Aiji. “Wait! I can make you akki roti, with ghee and coconut chutney. I will make it on a banana leaf. I have the rice flour dough ready with me.”



"I would love that, Ajji,"
said Kanchi. She felt
happier.



"Kanchi, do you like alu wadi? I don't want to
boast but I make the best," said Bhosale Uncle.

"I haven't eaten them, Uncle, but I would love to try!"

"You have to try the health drinks I make," said Partho. "Bael is in season right now. I will make bael panna for you, with some black salt. It is very refreshing."

"Thank you, Partho!"





“Kanchi, I know you are tired of eating baingan bharta,” said Bhima Aunty. “What if I use the same brinjal to cook you litti chokha? The aroma of the chokha is mouth-watering.”

“I will give it a try, Bhima Aunty.”



“What are you cooking, Bijju Akka? It smells great!”
asked Kanchi.

“I am cooking bongulo chicken, Kanchi. It is a special dish from my village. It is marinated chicken cooked inside a bamboo shoot, sealed with sal leaves. I cook it on hot coal to bring out the flavours. Would you like to have some?”

“I can’t wait to try it, Akka!”



“Hey Kanchi, how about a Shillong-style aloo muri snack? I am making some for me and my friends,” said Prema Didi.

“I love potatoes!” said Kanchi.



“No birthday is complete without tapioca chips, Kanchi. You just taste one. You will forget all about potato chips!” said Xavier Uncle.

“I will always love potatoes. But I want to try tapi... tapi... oca chips,” replied Kanchi.

Sunrise Society started preparing for Kanchi's birthday.
Sabina made fish vindaloo.
Dolani Uncle made Sindhi biryani with big chunks of potato.
Ami and Kayu made a Garhwali sweet called gulgula.





Chheda Uncle and Aunty took out their extra rolls of clothesline. They made a ropeway network to pass the dishes from one house to the other.

Mummy and Papa tore pages out of Kanchi's old colouring book and made party hats for all their neighbours.



Soon, dishes were being passed from one home to the other.

Kanchi enjoyed the feast.

Madhu was still recovering from COVID-19, but she joined in the celebration because everyone insisted.



She played fun Bollywood songs on her music system.

Kanchi danced. Her friends Riyaz and Kev and the security guard, Rohit, joined in.

As the sun began to set, Sunrise Society lit up with laughter and good food.

The Sunrise Society Food Map

Find out where you can find some of the dishes cooked by Kanchi's neighbours.

Sindhi biryani
Pakistan



Gulgula

Uttarakhand



Litti chokha
Bihar



Alu wadi
Maharashtra



Bael panna
West Bengal



Aloo muri
Meghalaya



Vindaloo
Goa



Bongulo chicken
Andhra Pradesh



Akki roti
Karnataka



Tapioca chips
Kerala



*Map is not to scale
and only for the sake
of representation

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The Birthday Menu

(English)

It is Kanchi's birthday and she can't go out to her favourite restaurant. Knowing that baingan bharta is all she has to look forward to, she is really upset. But her neighbours in Sunrise Society know that the best way to turn things around is with a feast! A story about community, compassion, and the food we eat.

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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